

Activism and Activists:

We Can All Be Champions of Change

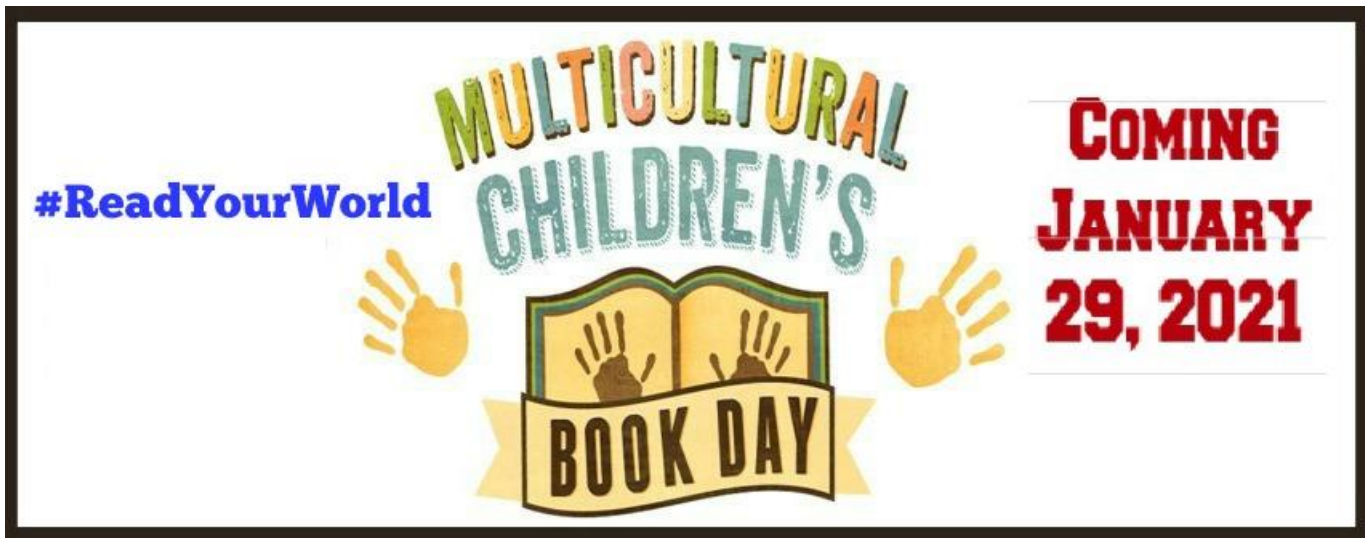
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Intro

The Mission of MCBBD

Our mission is to not only raise awareness for the kid's books that celebrate diversity, but to get more of these of books into classrooms and libraries

In light of what is happening on a global level in 2020, it's no secret that everyone is learning very quickly what is important in life and how much we all have to be grateful for.

COVID-19 has swept through our world with no regard to age, gender, race, geography or socio-economic status, and has brought virtually everyone to their knees. The loss, struggle, and sacrifice have been very real for people across the globe. But through it all, the human spirit remains stronger than ever.

Then, a new awakening came on the heels of the tragic death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020.

During the months that followed, the world discovered new heroes, new voices, new activists, and new champions demanded change. The word "activism" has meant many things in the past, not all of them positive. But as we all struggle to find a New Normal, activists and activism has taken on a new meaning to reflect our new circumstances.

The emphasis of these two words now lies in teaching compassion and tolerance of those who are "different" while also guiding others towards what is right and fair and true.

We hope you enjoy the following booklist, resources, and activity guide.

Thank you for your support!

~The MCBBD Team

Activist and Activism Children's Book List

This book list on activism and activists is by no means comprehensive but is meant to offer options on this topic.

One goal of this list is to show activists and activism around the world and throughout history. Another is to show the myriad of ways to be a champion for change – it's not just standing in front of a microphone or participating in a march.

These books show how words, photos, paintings, songs and other creative endeavors can help create awareness and start a conversation. Another aspect of activism that this list would like to inspire is that one child can make a difference.

Activists don't have to be famous to be effective; a single act can have a tremendous effect.

*** Please remember to support local business and bookstores whenever possible.*

****Disclosure: Some of these links may be affiliate links. Any commission earned goes towards our Free Diverse Books for Classrooms Project.*

[*A is for Activist by Innosanto Nagara*](#)

Use this alphabet book with a powerful message to teach young children about activism. [picture book, ages 2 and up]

[*We Are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom, illustrated by Michaela Goade*](#)

Indigenous peoples around the world protect our natural resources including life-giving water. In response to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline protest by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, this picture book beckons us all to get involved to protect the Earth's water. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*Let's Talk About Race by Julius Lester, illustrated by Karen Barbour*](#)

Julius Lester uses his own story as a springboard to initiate an open-ended conversation about race and explore what makes each of us special. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*The Stars Just up the Street by Sue Soltis, illustrated by Christine Davenier*](#)

An activist is someone who works for change and in this case, Mabel just wants to see the thousands of stars that her grandfather viewed when he was a boy. Even from the perch of a tree, Mabel can only count a few dozen. In order to get a better view of the sky, Mabel has to convince her neighbors to join her cause. It turns out that they need to get more people involved than just the neighbors, but it's worth the effort! [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by Meilo So*](#)

This picture book demonstrates how kids can make a difference, as they did in the case of a hundred newly hatched sea turtles on the South Carolina coast. [picture book, ages 5 and up]

[*The Pink Hat by Andrew Joyner*](#)

A pink hat has many lives including keeping a young girl warm at a march. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*Based on the song by Bob Marley: Get Up, Stand Up* adapted by Cedella Marley, illustrated by John Jay Cabuay](#)

Bob Marley's music spoke out against poverty and oppression, and here, his lyrics are retold in an anti-bullying message by his daughter who created the backstory for this picture book. It's a reminder that being an anti-bullying ally is a powerful way to be an activist in one's own community. [picture book, ages 3 and up]

[*Unstoppable* by Adam Rex, illustrated by Laura Park](#)

For those who like humor to get a point across, try this picture book about working together. It starts with one persecuted bird and ends with a congressional act to save a lakefront as a protected park for animals. Cooperation is powerful indeed! [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship & Freedom* by Tim Tingle, illustrated by Jeanne Rorex Bridges](#)

In the days before the Trail of Tears, the river Bok Chitto was a boundary, separating the Choctaws from the Mississippi plantation owners. This river was the line between slavery and freedom for the enslaved. When Martha Tom, a young Choctaw, crossed the river in search of blackberries, she met Little Mo, an enslaved boy who helps her find her way home. Their friendship continued as the years pass. When Little Mo's mother was to be sold, Little Mo had a plan. His family, with the help of the Choctaws, would cross to freedom. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*This is the Earth* by Deedee Cummings](#)

This is the Earth shares a message of peace, love, respect, compassion, inclusion. The book's message bears repeating: peace is meant for all of us and it is everyone's responsibility to care for each other like the united family that we really are. This timely book postulates that we are all sharing this world together. The author has also included excellent study and talking points that will inspire adults and kids alike to be activists for equality and change. [ages 4 and up]

[*Luz Sees the Light* and *Luz Makes a Splash* by Claudia Dávila](#)

Both of these graphic novels have an environmental message with Latino characters in an urban setting. Luz is the activist that changes her neighborhood by getting everyone involved. [graphic novel, ages 6 and up]

[*Stella Diaz Never Gives Up* by Angela Dominguez](#)

When Stella visits the ocean for the first time in Mexico, she learns that the sea creatures are in danger due to pollution. Saving the ocean is daunting, but Stella never gives up. She calls upon her friends, new and old, to help. [chapter book, ages 6 and up]

[*A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée](#)

Starting middle school is hard enough, and Shayla finds herself questioning where she belongs. When a not guilty verdict for a police officer who shot an African American man rocks her community, she joins the #BlackLivesMatter movement by wearing a black armband. This gesture of solidarity is now a line in the sand. Is it worth it to challenge her school's administration by continuing to wear it? But how can she not now that her eyes are open to structural racism? [middle grade, ages 8 and up]

[*Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes](#)

This timely book shows the perspective of twelve-year-old Jerome, now a ghost. His murder by police -- the result of a toy being mistaken for a weapon -- shows how this tragedy affects Jerome and his family, but also the police officer and his family. Jewell Parker Rhodes also weaves in Emmitt Tills's story. Use this book to understand the genesis of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. [middle grade, ages 9 and up]

[*Strange Birds: A Field Guide to Ruffling Feathers* by Celia C. Pérez](#)

Four girls bond over a shared goal to get rid of outdated traditions by their local scout organization. In starting their own group, they find justice, independence, and, most of all, friendship. [middle grade, ages 9 and up]

[One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia](#)

Set in Oakland, California, three sisters visit their mother who has abandoned them and hang out at a center run by the Black Panther Party. It's a summer that they won't forget. [middle grade, ages 8 and up]

[Yes No Maybe So by Becky Albertalli and Aisha Sayeed](#)

Jamie Goldberg, who is Jewish, and Maya Rehman, who is Muslim, are an unlikely political activist pairing. Jamie prefers to stay behind the scenes after an unfortunate interview incident involving vomiting. Maya has no interest in political canvassing, especially with a boy she hardly remembers from preschool. But, as they work together going door to door to win support for their progressive candidate, they find that there is a lot more at stake than they realize.. [young adult, ages 14 and up]

[Watch Us Rise by Renee Watson and Ellen Hagan](#)

When Chelsea and Jasmine start a Women's Rights Club at their New York City school, they don't expect their poetry and essays on microaggressions to go viral. When the principal shuts down their club, they must fight for their voices to be heard. [young adult, ages 14 and up]

[All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kelly](#)

One of the biggest white privileges is the stereotype that comes to mind when you describe a person as "All-American". Most will picture a white person with blond hair and blue eyes. In [ALL AMERICAN BOYS](#), authors Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's story of stereotyping and racial profiling is one to be read, and read again. From [White Fragility Books for Kids](#). [young adult, ages 14 and up]

[Art in Action: Make a Statement, Change Your World by Matthew "Levee" Chavez](#)

Art and creativity have the power to change the world. This book is a primer on how to begin either individually or collectively as a community. Art -- whether in the form of words, drawings, photos, or more -- is a powerful tool! [nonfiction art book, for ages 8 and up]

[We Are The Change: Words of Inspiration from Civil Rights Leaders by Harry Belafonte](#)

"... not all of us are comfortable being outspoken in political action." Dan Santat

With words of inspiration by civil rights leaders and art from children's book illustrators, this book was inspired by the work of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) which guards the rights of all Americans under law. Illustrators give their personal thoughts on a quote of an activist that they illustrate. This is a beautiful picture book to get the conversation started about what it means to be the change that we seek. [picture book, ages 8 and up]

[We Are All Greta: Be Inspired to Save the World by Valentina Giannella, illustrated by Manuela Marazzi](#)

Centered on climate change, this book provides valuable information about the impacts on our environment and how to work together for change. It is part science, part biography, and 100% inspirational! Use this book as a handbook for young people interested in activism. It will inspire them to start their own successful movement, just like Greta Thunberg. [nonfiction middle grade, ages 11 and up]

[We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices edited by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson](#)

Fifty diverse children's authors and illustrators contribute a message to children about how to navigate a world fraught with divisiveness, bias, and racism. Their words inspire a new generation to create a better world. [anthology, ages 8 and up]

Children's Biographies on Activists

[*Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh](#)

Sylvia Mendez's family took on segregation in 1945 ... seven years before the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education but their story is largely unknown. Their fight is still relevant today, seventy years later where segregation is unofficial but still prevalent. [nonfiction picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans* by Phil Bildner, illustrated by John Parra](#)

An activist need not be political. An activist can also bring about social change as in the case of Marvelous Cornelius who, as a sanitation worker, kept the streets of New Orleans clean. When Hurricane Katrina wrought destruction on the city, Cornelius used his show time skills to inspire others around the world to pitch in. [picture book biography, ages 5 and up]

[*Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909* by Michele Markel, illustrated by Melissa Sweet](#)

This is the true story of Clara Lemlich, a young Ukrainian immigrant who led the largest strike of women workers in U.S. history. [picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Fifty Cents and a Dream: Young Booker T. Washington* by Jabari Asim, illustrated by Byran Collier](#)

Young Booker T. Washington lived during the transition from enslavement to emancipation and was given the opportunity for education while working in a coal mine. He journeyed over 500 miles by foot to attend Hampton Institute, a boarding school for African-Americans. Eventually, Booker T. Washington founded the Tuskegee Institute. [advanced picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Biddy Mason Speaks Up* by Arisa White and Laura Atkins, illustrated by Laura Freeman](#)

Bridget "Biddy" Mason was born enslaved in 1818 in Hancock, Georgia. Freedom for Biddy and her family would come about when the slave-owning family migrated west to California where slavery was illegal. She learned about healing plants from Granny Ellen, an elder who was also enslaved by the same family as Biddy. Her skills as a midwife and healer would eventually make her one of the most successful people in Los Angeles. This is an important book to understand U.S. history and its roots in protecting slavery. It is only with this knowledge that we can understand the racism that exists today. [nonfiction, ages 10 and up]

[*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* by Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi, illustrated by Yutaka Houlette](#)

This series celebrates real-life heroes and heroines of social progress. This is Fred's story of standing up for justice by refusing to be imprisoned in a concentration camp for simply being of Japanese descent. He went to jail for resisting and his courage made the United States a fairer place for all Americans. [ages 10 and up]

[*Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Ekua Holmes](#)

Fannie Lou Hamer was a key figure of the Civil Rights Movement, inspiring people with her speeches and powerful singing voice. Like other Civil Rights icons, Fannie endured police brutality on the front lines of the fight for justice. She played a pivotal role in the Freedom Summer of 1964 as "the country's number one freedom-fighting woman." [picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* by Cynthia Levinson, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton](#)

Is nine-years-old too young to make a difference? This is the true story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, the youngest person to be arrested for a civil rights protest. She marched in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. [picture book, ages 5 and up]

[Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges](#)

At just six-years-old, Ruby Bridges became the first African American student to desegregate an elementary school in the South. Despite the hate she faced, Ruby Bridges held fast, returning to school day after day until the school reluctantly integrated. This is her story, in her own words, of that year. She includes a historical backdrop of the events surrounding it that gives context to her own experience. [picture book, ages 8 and up]

[As Fast as Words Could Fly by Pamela M. Tuck, illustrated by Eric Velasquez](#)

14-year-old Mason Steele used his typing skills both as a writer and a speed typist to prove that he had the right to attend a previously all-white school. His important Civil Rights story showed that kids could make a difference through the personal battles they fought every day at school. [picture book biography, ages 6 and up]

[March Trilogy by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell](#)

This powerful true story of John Lewis spans his lifelong struggle for human rights beginning during the days of segregation and Jim Crow. His story reflects the broader civil rights movement as well as details his role as an activist and politician in the fight for civil and human rights. [graphic novel, ages 12 and up]

[Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by Doreen Rappaport](#)

Hate Can Not Drive Out Hate. Only Love Can Do That.

A beautifully illustrated picture book does justice to Dr. King's legacy, showing us the influences in his life as a young boy that shaped him into the great man he became. [picture book, ages 5 and up]

[The Tree Lady: The True Story of How One Tree-Loving Woman Changed a City Forever by H. Joseph Hopkins, illustrated by Jill McElmurry](#)

In the 1860s, girls were discouraged from studying science, but Kate Sessions was not deterred. She liked studying trees and pursued a degree in science from the University of California, the first woman to do so. When she moved to San Diego for her first job, it was a desert town with no trees. She became a tree hunter to find trees for that climate. She grew elms, oaks, eucalyptuses, and palm trees, and soon these trees were to be found everywhere in San Diego. She transformed City Park, now called Balboa Park, into an oasis of trees for the Panama-California Exposition. She's now known as the Mother of Balboa Park. [picture book biography, ages 4 and up]

[Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya by Donna Jo Napoli](#)

Wangari Muta Maathai changed Kenya tree by tree, becoming the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.

This gorgeously illustrated picture book tells the inspirational story of Wangari Maathai and how she founded the Green Belt Movement, an African grassroots organization that empowers people to mobilize and combat deforestation, soil erosion, and environmental degradation. Today, more than 30 million trees have been planted throughout Mama Miti's native Kenya. [picture book biography, ages 4 and up]

[Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World by Laurie Lawlor, illustrated by Laura Beingessner](#)

Rachel Carson rose from poverty to become a biologist, writer, and key figure in the environmental movement. Her book, ***Silent Spring***, brought the spotlight to the impact that humans have on our planet and inspired a new generation to become environmental activists. [picture book biography, ages 4 and up]

[Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Yuyi Morales](#)

Cesar Chavez, along with Dolores Huerta, co-founded the National Farm Workers Association to improve the lives of thousands of migrant farmworkers. He organized a 340-mile march for safer working conditions and to increase pay to a living wage. [picture book, ages 8 and up]

[*Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers* by Sarah Warren](#)

Dolores Huerta co-founded the National Farm Workers Association along with Cesar Chavez. As a school teacher, she saw first hand the poverty and food insecurity suffered by her migrant farmworker students. She left teaching to work on behalf of migrant farmworkers and social justice, using stories as a method of persuasion. [picture book, ages 7 and up]

[*The Voice that Won the Vote: How One Woman's Words Made History* by Elisa Boxer, illustrated by Vivien Mildenerger](#)

There were many women (and men) who fought for women's right to vote but it would take a single vote in the Tennessee legislature to make this law in the United States. It would come down to a single congressman and a single woman. They happen to be mother and son. A timeline of the women's suffrage moment is detailed in the endnote. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*No Steps Behind: Beate Sirota Gordon's Battle for Women's Rights in Japan* by Jeff Gottesfeld, illustrated by Shiella Witanto](#)

Beate Sirota came to live in Japan as a young girl due to her father's job as a concert pianist and teacher. Her knowledge of Japanese culture and fluency in Japanese would help Japan rebuild their country after the destruction caused by World War II. At just twenty-two years old, Beate was assigned the job to help write Japan's new Constitution. She was determined to correct the inequality that she witnessed growing up in Japan. Her contribution to Japan's new laws gave Japanese women equal rights including the right to vote. [picture book, ages 8 and up]

[*One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia* by Miranda Paul, illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon](#)

By cutting the bags into strips, Isatou and her friends cut the bags into strips and roll them into spools of plastic thread. They teach themselves to crochet them into bags. Some people in the village laugh at them; others call them “dirty” but the women prevail. They bring them to market and manage to sell them. With this money, Isatou can replace her grandmother’s goat. But even more than that, Isatou has created a cottage industry for women that, by upcycling plastic bags, also helps make her people become healthier, wealthier, and more self-reliant. [picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Shane W. Evans](#)

At one-hundred-years old, Lillian makes her way to her polling place and recalls her family's personal history fighting for the right to vote. It's a reminder not to take the ability to vote lightly. [picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Malala Yousafzai: Warrior with Words* by Karen Leggett Abouraya, illustrated by L. C. Wheatley](#)

Even a child can send a powerful message. Malala Yousafzai spoke out for every child's right to education. Targeted by the Taliban, Malala was shot by a gunman. Her life-threatening injury did not silence her. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, the youngest at age 17 to earn this honor. [picture book, ages 4 and up]

[*Twenty-Two Cents: Muhammad Yunus and the Village Bank* by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Jamel Akib](#)

Muhammad founded Grameen Bank where people could borrow small amounts of money to start a business, and then pay back the bank without exorbitant interest charges. These micro-loans changed the lives of millions of impoverished people by loaning the equivalent of more than ten billion US dollars. [picture book, ages 6 and up]

[*Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders, illustrated by Steven Salerno](#)

Harvey Milk and Gilbert Baker created the rainbow flag as a symbol of equality and inclusion. It's a symbol of pride for LGBTQ+ people to love themselves as they are. [picture book, ages 5 and up]

[*Loving vs. Virginia: A Documentary of the Landmark Civil Rights Case* by Patricia Hruby Powell, illustrated by Shadra Strickland](#)

In lyrical, spare free verse, this chapter book tells the story of two teenagers who fell in love, got married, broke the law, and changed the law that they broke. Their landmark case made mixed-race marriage legal. 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of their case, *Loving vs. Virginia*, which fought against discrimination, racism, and segregation, and WON! [free verse chapter book, ages 14 and up]

[*Sylvia & Aki* by Winifred Conkling](#)

When Aki Munemitsu and her family are forced into a concentration camp in Arizona for being Japanese-American, their banker helps them rent their asparagus farm to the Mendez family who has a daughter, Sylvia, around the same age as Aki. The Westminster School District won't let Sylvia into the all-white schools though her lighter-skinned cousins are allowed to enroll. The family sues. *Mendez vs. Westminster School District* is the landmark desegregation case before *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*. [chapter book, ages 9 and up]

[*When a Ghost Talks Listen* by Tim Tingle](#)

It might not be widely known that the Choctaw were allies of the U.S. Government and that Choctaw Chief Pushmataha was also a U.S. Army General and close friend of Andrew Jackson. In this second book of the series, the reader learns that when Chief Pushmataha advocates on behalf of his people at the request of President Andrew Jackson to come to Washington D.C., his wartime ally is actually setting him up for murder in order to remove the Choctaw from their lands in what will become the Trail of Tears. [middle grade, ages 8 and up]

[*Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes* by Juan Felipe Herrera, paintings by Raúl Colón](#)

In the land of immigrants, it is an irony that Latino lives have been largely ignored. Although there have been incredible contributions by Hispanic Americans since the beginnings of this nation, their pioneering roles often have been overshadowed and their identities besmirched by the terms such as “alien” and “illegal.” *forward by Juan Felipe Herrera*

This book belongs in every library because it's true that Hispanic American heroes don't get the attention that they deserve. Juan Felipe Herrera carefully curates 21 heroes with an emphasis on those who helped others. Activists Adelina Otero-Warren, Dennis Chavez, Helen Rodríguez Trías, Ignacio Lozano, Dolores Huerta, Jaime Escalante, Joan Baez, Judy Baca, Julia de Burgos, Sonia Sotomayor, Tomas Rivera, and Cesar Chavez are included. [biography chapter book, ages 8 and up]

[*Rise Up: Ordinary Kids with Extraordinary Stories* by Amanda Li, illustrated by Amy Blackwell](#)

Twenty-nine kids who have overcome incredible challenges are featured in this anthology that includes related activities. Young activists featured include Greta Thunberg, William Kamkwamba, Boyan Slat, Yeonmi Park, Abraham Keita, Malala Yousafzai, Lizzie Velásquez, Mohamad Al Jounde, Kevin Breel, and Pierre Demalvilain. [biography with activities anthology, ages 8 and up]

[*Rad American Women A-Z: Rebels, Trailblazers, and Visionaries who Shaped Our History . . . and Our Future!* by Kate Schatz, illustrated by Miriam Klein Stahl](#)

Rad American Women A-Z showcases women who broke boundaries in the fight for equality and social justice. 26 diverse individuals are matched to a letter of the alphabet, and each is an agent of change in her own way. [nonfiction short biography book, ages 8 and up]

Activism and Activists: Activities

Two Creative Activities that Teach Kids about Social Justice

from Rebekah Gienapp a.k.a. The Barefoot Mommy



If there's one thing I've learned as the curriculum developer for a children's peace camp, it's this: creative activities are one of the best ways to engage kids with social justice issues.

As a camp teacher, I saw that the children I worked with were eager to learn. But they also wanted to have fun.

During camp, the kids were most enthusiastic about activities that incorporated music, art, and drama. After all, one 9-year-old told me, camp "shouldn't feel like school."

The arts-themed activities included in this guide were a hit because they invited the kids to bring their whole selves, with all of their senses and talents, into this learning experience.

Activity #1: Create new lyrics to a civil rights movement classic

- Suitable for: ages 5—12
- Social justice themes: civil rights, courage, protest
- Background on the song

Many children who attend church already know the song This Little Light of Mine.

What they probably don't know is the powerful role this song played in the civil rights movement. The gospel song was written in the 1920's for children. (It was not, contrary to what you might read some places, an African-American spiritual.)

In the 1960's, Zilphia Horton of the Highlander Folk Center (a social justice training center in East Tennessee) adapted the lyrics for the civil rights movement.

It was Mississippi sharecropper turned voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer who best known for using this song in civil rights demonstrations.

Activity Steps

1. If some children in the group already know this song, invite them to sing it with you and share the verses they know. Alternately, you can introduce the song yourself, teaching them verses including:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...

All around the neighborhood, I'm gonna let it shine... Won't let anyone blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine...

(If you're not familiar with the song, you can listen to a civil rights version of it [here](#).)

2. Ask the children, where do you think people have sung this song? Let's name some places people might have sung it.

3. Show children the picture of Fannie Lou Hamer on the next page. Use the bio below (adapt it into your own words as needed) to share who Mrs. Hamer was. Alternately, for children ages 9+, you could read some of the poems included in *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* by Carole Boston Weatherford and Ekua Holmes.



Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer

Fannie Lou Hamer's parents were sharecroppers in Mississippi. This means that they grew and harvested crops, but they didn't own the land they farmed. Because the farmer who owned the land kept most of the money from their work, her parents were poor, and sometimes they didn't have enough food to eat. Mrs. Hamer had to work in the fields with them when she was still a child.

Later, when she was a grown up, Mrs. Hamer heard about the civil rights movement. She met Black people like her who were standing up for their right to be able to choose their own leaders by voting, as well as white and Black college students who were standing with them. Mrs. Hamer decided to become a civil rights activist and help other Black people register to vote.

She knew it would be dangerous, that many white people would try to stop her, and that she could be arrested by the police. She told people she did this work because "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."

One day, Mrs. Hamer and a big group of other sharecroppers decided they would go register to vote, so that they could help choose their community's leaders and have the same rights as white people. The police stopped the bus and arrested the bus driver. Many of the people on the bus were afraid, and Mrs.

Hamer began singing *This Little Light of Mine* to help everyone feel brave and remember why they were standing up for their rights.

One of the verses that Mrs. Hamer liked to sing is *“I’ve got the light of freedom, I’m gonna let it shine.”*

What do you think freedom means? How do you think the song helped people feel brave?

4. Ask the children, what verse would you like to add to the song? Where would you like to take your light? What will your light help you do?

Activity #2: Make a protest sign



- Suitable for: Ages 6+
- Social justice themes: protest, adaptable to any issue
- Supplies needed: Chart paper or posterboard for each child and markers.
- Optional: Pictures of protests signs or a copy of Hands Up! by Breanna J. McDonald

Making protest signs is a great way for children to learn one aspect of how social change is made. This activity also gives kids a way to express what they are passionate about.

Activity Steps:

1. Ask if any of the children know what a protest is, or have ever attended one. Why do people hold protests? What do they hope will happen because of their protest?

2. Share that people often make signs to hold at protests. Show some examples of signs in the book Hands Up! through pictures you've collected online, or by writing common slogans on a white board or chart paper, such as:

- Black Lives Matter
- Build Bridges, Not Walls
- Water Is Life
- There Is No Planet B

Solicit answers from the children about what they think these slogans mean.

3. Point out that effective protest posters have slogans that are short and easy to understand. Pictures can help explain what your message means, or make your poster more moving.

4. Tell the group each person will have the chance to make their own protest poster about something they care about. Brainstorm a few slogan ideas before passing out the chart paper and markers.

5. Display the finished posters, or invite the children to use their signs to hold a mock protest.



Hi there! I'm Rebekah Gienapp. I'm mama to a boisterous 7 year old and stepmom to a chill 21 year old. I'm also an activist, a former community organizer, and a religious educator for kids.

I started The Barefoot Mommy because of my desire to help other parents and teachers raise young activists. I'm on a continual journey towards antiracist and social justice parenting, still learning and growing every day. I'm so glad to be traveling this path with you.

Do you have questions about anything in this guide? Drop me a line at

rebekah@thebarefootmommy.com or connect with me at [facebook.com/ BarefootInMemphis](https://facebook.com/BarefootInMemphis).

Sharing Message of Loving and Peace

From Make A Way Media



Activities from Make A Way Media and founder Deedee Cummings

Long-time Multicultural Children's Book Day supported and sponsor, Deedee Cummings has a passion for sharing messages of love and peace from a #OWNVOICES point of view.

Her award-winning diverse children's picture book, [*This is the Earth*](#), has been applauded for its beauty, vibrancy, and the universal message that has resonated with all ages now more than ever.

As a long-time family therapist, Deedee has seen first-hand the power that a positive and educational book can have on children and families. The message in [*This is the Earth*](#) shares the reality that we all need to focus on sharing this world that we call home instead of acting as though each continent, each, country, and each neighborhood is like a completely different planet.

Inspired by the book, Deedee has created the below Discussion Questions about Peace to be used at home or in the classroom. This activity includes thought and conversation-invoking concepts on issues and

struggles that have our world at odds with each other and how the Human Race can work peacefully and effectively towards a solution.

Enjoy!

Peace means many things to many people. Find a quiet space, close your eyes and shut out all the noise. Some people call this finding peace. Some people say “Peace” when they are saying hello or goodbye to you, but where and how do you find peace? I think you have to understand what peace is first.

The *Merriam-Webster* definition of peace is:

- 1- a state of tranquility or quiet: such as a:
 - freedom from civil disturbance
 - B: a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom
- 2- freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions 3-
 - harmony in personal relations
- 4a: a state or period of mutual concord between governments
- 4b: a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity
- 5- Used interjectionally to ask for silence or calm or as a greeting or farewell

What does peace mean to you? Do you have your own definition of peace? Please explain.

Here are a few ideas and statements about peace from important people in history:

We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Mother Teresa

Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one.

John Lennon

It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to *believe* in it. One must work at it.

Eleanor Roosevelt

"Nobody can bring you peace but yourself."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Peace and justice are two sides of the same coin."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

What do you want to say about peace? Add your personal statement about peace to this list.

Take some time to consider these questions. Think about them.

Ask your friends, relatives and teachers what their answer is to these questions. Keep a journal of your answers and the ones you receive from others.

Why is peace important?

Is there an image in this book that makes you feel peaceful? Why?

When thinking about peace, is it helpful to think about the Earth as one big home for all of us?

We all have the same basic bodies. We all have hearts, brains, dreams, and ideas. Other than living in different places around the globe, what makes people different from you?

Do you think it helps us be more peaceful when we learn about other cultures and different kinds of people? Please give examples of how learning can help us be more peaceful.

Can you think of a time when you made a new friend who seemed different from you? What were your thoughts about the person before they became your friend?

Think of a friend who is very different from you. What is something cool you learned that you would have never known if it weren't for this friend?

A great way to learn about different kinds of people and cultures is by sharing food. Why do you think this is helpful?

Most people, if not all, just want to be heard. Do you have to agree with all of the thoughts and feelings of another person if you just sit quietly and listen to their story?

What would need to happen to make the world a more peaceful place?

When this book talks about our neighbors, who does this refer to?

In this book, what does it mean to say, "You are my neighbor and that alone earns my regard for your worth?"

Why do you think it is so hard for some people to let others be and to live without conflict?

What color is peace?

What does the statement below mean?
Everyone has the right to live in peace.

When you decide to help others live in peace, do you have to give up anything to help make this happen? Why might this be an important question to explore and examine?

Let's examine this passage from the book:

You show me your concerns are no threat to me.

Let's both help each other and the better we all will be.

Can you explain examples of situations where someone's peace or freedom may have seemed threatening to the peace or freedom of another?

In the book, there is a seagull with a plastic ring around its neck from the pollution we find in the ocean. This is very dangerous to this bird and to other animals on our planet. If I want to help prevent this from happening to any other animal, does this mean that I cannot drink sodas anymore? What are some other solutions to this problem?)

Why is it so much easier for people to be mean and hateful in a car (road rage) or on social media?

Before you say something mean in a text or on social media, imagine yourself saying it directly to their face or imagine saying it in front of someone you respect, like a grandparent or teacher. Would you still say it?

Practice saying the word THINK to yourself before you say something mean.

T.H.I.N.K.* about what you are going to say.

*Original author/ source unknown.

Ask yourself:

Is what I am about to say True?

Is it Helpful?

Is it Inspirational?

Is it Necessary?

Is it Kind?

If the answer to these questions is no, it probably should not be said.

Can you think of a time that you said something that was not true or kind and how it made you feel later?

Can you think of a time that someone said something about you that was not true or kind and how it made you feel later?

Some people talk to a counselor or a therapist to live more peaceful lives. How can talking to a counselor or therapist help with this goal?

We are not perfect. We are human. We make mistakes. We need to apologize when we make a mistake or when we hurt someone. Why is this so hard to do sometimes?

Does apologizing make you weak?

Is an apology always enough?

Sometimes we become aware that someone else needs to apologize. Studies show that when we speak up or otherwise intervene, conflict and bullying behaviors often stop immediately. What keeps us from speaking up sometimes?

What about the common statement, “snitches get stitches”? This is a statement that others make to keep us from speaking up. Why do we sometimes believe that speaking up and doing the right thing, is a bad thing? When we talk about it out loud, does it make sense that it’s a bad thing to speak up?

Some people believe that we are all one big family and the Earth is our home. What do you think about this thought?

Why is a book like this important?

Does “the world” need this book?

Did you need this book?

When you choose to make decisions that lead to more peace in your life, who does this help the most- other people or you?

Mother Teresa said, “Peace begins with a smile.” Decide today to live a more peaceful lifestyle, not just because it is the right thing to do for others, but because it is good for you too. What are five things you can start doing easily and immediately to become a more peaceful neighbor on Earth?

Peaceful Protest Activities and Advice from Bethany and Havana Edwards of Biracial Bookworms



Biracial Bookworms has been a long-time supporter and returning CoHost for MCBD for many years. We value the insight, passion, first-hand experience and wisdom of Bethany (mom) and daughter, Havana.

This dynamic duo has created two epic infographics to help your young readers and activists learn *10 Items to Bring to a Peaceful Protest* and *What to Expect at a Peaceful Protest*.

****These two Infographics will also be included as separate attachments at the end of the kit.****

Bethany has deeper information on the Biracial Bookworms post [Children's Books about Peaceful Protests](#) and via her online course, [Raising Readers, Activists, and Leaders From Birth](#)

Enjoy!

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A PEACEFUL PROTEST

By: Bethany Edwards and Havana Chapman-Edwards
@biracialbookworms @thetinydiplomat

CALL AND RESPONSE

There will be lots of call and response while at a protest. You can expect chants to be led from in front of the crowd or within the crowd as you walk using megaphones and loudspeakers.

SIGNS

Most people will have signs ranging from funny to heartbreaking. Some will use vulgar language so it is good to prepare children they might see words that are inappropriate to repeat at school or home.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

There will be some level of law enforcement at all protests. Assume your actions are being watched and that your words are being listened to. If you suspect pepper spray or tear gas will be used by law enforcement, note that water will not work. Use milk, vinegar, or lemon juice.

COUNTER PROTESTORS

The First Amendment protects counter-protestors. They can voice their dissent, but no one is allowed to disrupt the other. Both protests can be within the vicinity of one another. Be aware of your surroundings at all times especially in open-carry states.

ACCIDENTS

Whenever you are in a large crowd, there are minor issues to be aware of, especially if the demonstration includes movement or marching. Don't wear things which can easily be caught or grabbed in a crowd (i.e. jewelry, ties, loose hair)

SPEECHES

Peaceful protests will have an array of speakers talking about their experiences with the protest issue. It is always good to research who will be speaking beforehand for more insight on the age appropriateness of the protest.

BE READY TO LISTEN

When you are attending a peaceful protest, it's not your job to decide how things should go. It's your job to show up and listen and be in support. Deprioritizing yourself is a critical part of protesting. Be prepared to amplify what others are saying. Be prepared to listen. Finally, if you are white, be prepared to use your white privilege to physically help BIPOC stay safe.

WHAT TO BRING TO A PROTEST WITH KIDS

THE 10 MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS

By Bethany Edwards and Havana Chapman-Edwards

1

A MASK

For all large group gatherings, COVID-19 precautions should be taken. Wearing a mask and social distancing decreases the risk for both your children and other people.

2

WATER/SNACKS/SUNSCREEN

This may seem obvious, but there is not always a good place to stop if the protest includes walking or moving. Bring everything you need for the duration you will be gone, especially if you are in harsh weather (cold or hot).

3

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Make sure kids have your phone number and an emergency phone number (pin it on them or write them on the child's arm). If kids get lost, for those uncomfortable with the police, instruct kids to find another parent and show them the number. Additional steps: tell a friend/family member where you are going and when to expect you back home.

4

A SIGN

After talking with your child about what the protest, march, or rally is about, having them make a sign "in their own words" is important. This is critical in teaching them that their voice is powerful. *If you want to attach signs, use cardboard and not wood.

5

HEADPHONES

Protests can be very loud. Parents and caregivers who bring noise cancelling headphones when the chants or the bull horns get too loud or too stressful can save a lot of stress for children who might be sensitive or has an auditory disability.

VISIT @BIRACIALBOOKWORMS AND
@THETINYDIPLOMAT FOR MORE.

Youth Activism Project: DOING A ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS

NAME: _____ GRADE & SECTION: _____ DATE: _____

DOING A ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS

Many times, when people want to create change, they focus on the symptoms of the problem rather than the actual causes.

Of course, it's important to attack the symptoms of a problem to make sure they're not getting worse or causing new problems.

But only focusing on the symptoms means that the problem is probably going to come back because you're not attacking the root causes and the source of the problem in the first place.

Let's take littering as an example.

Symptoms of littering include the actual litter found outside and in bodies of water, which can negatively affect wildlife and whole ecosystems.

But, if you're only focusing on the symptoms, you might just focusing on how to clean up the litter, which doesn't actually address why there's litter in the first place.

Using the "why" technique can help you figure the root causes of littering:

There's a lot of litter in my neighborhood. **Why?**

People are littering. **Why?**

They don't care about the environment. **Why?**

They haven't been taught to care.

Finally, we have arrived at **one of the root causes** of littering: lack of education.

Do this process multiple times to see if there are other root causes by asking "why else" at each level. For example, other reasons why people may not be littering might include lack of trash cans in public spaces, lack of signage discouraging littering, etc.

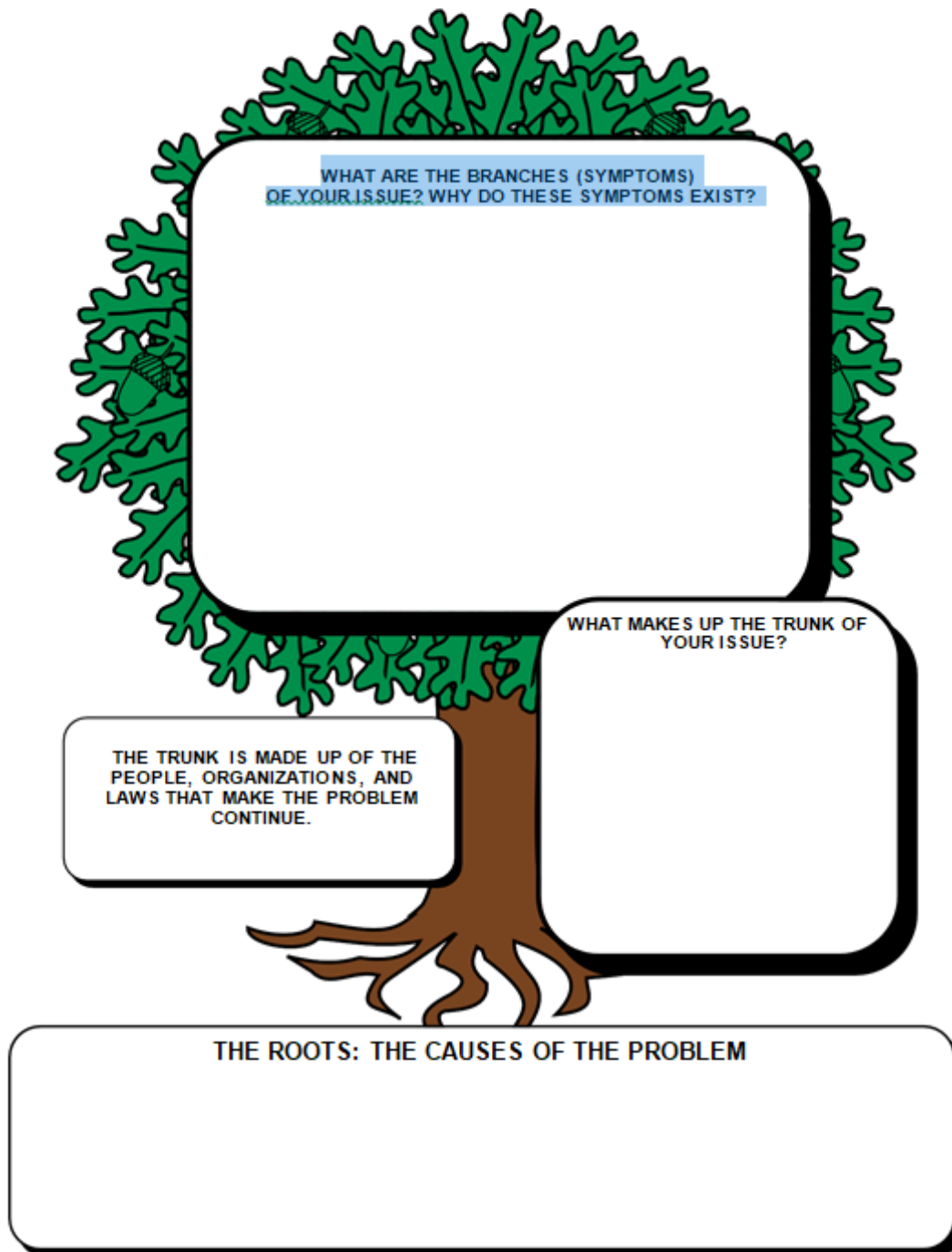
On the next page, try this technique with the societal issue that you're passionate about!



Need help figuring out your issue? Some issues that kids tend to care about include:

- climate change
- school shootings
- bullying
- mental health problems
- police brutality

YOUR ISSUE: _____



© Youth Activism Project, 2020 — To learn more, go to youthactivismproject.org/get-involved/

The Youth Activism Project has a plethora of amazing resources and downloads [HERE](#)



If you think you're too small to
have an **impact**, try going to bed
with a **mosquito!**

- African Proverb



The Youth Activism Project has been helping teens **#GetActivated** since 2004! There is no minimum age for leadership!



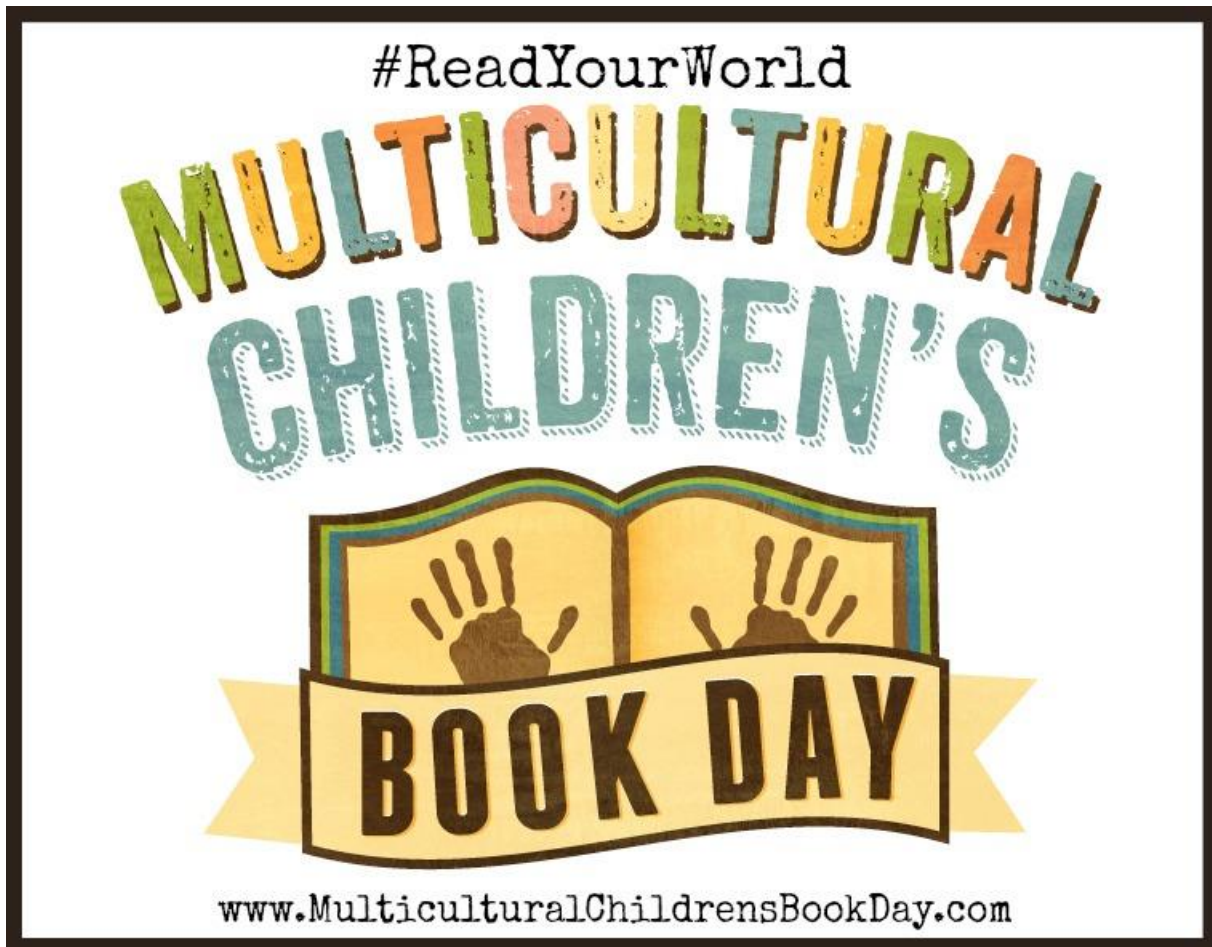
“So let’s start with you. If you want to learn how to become an activist or a changemaker or whatever you want to call it, then sign up for our e-alerts and follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. And if you’re a US-based student, be a member of our community! Take it from me—you won’t regret it 😊”

Always in solidarity,

Anika

****These two pages are available separately in the Zip File for easy printing and sharing****

Other Free Gifts, Resources and the Backstory of Multicultural Children's Book Day



The online world is buzzing with the excitement and anticipation as planning for the next global online diverse children's literature celebration known as Multicultural Children's Book Day (MCBD) continues. This on and offline diverse kids' and YA book-related event is in its seventh year and their mission of getting diverse children's books into the hands of readers, parents, caregivers, teachers, and librarians has never wavered.

To date, the non-profit has worked diligently to get over 8,800 free diverse kids' and YA books into homes, classrooms, daycares, organizations, and libraries.

How MCBD Came to Be

After being frustrated by a lack of diverse and multicultural children's books available to their own families, reading and play advocates Valarie Budayr from Audrey Press Books and Mia Wenjen from Pragmatic Mom decided to take matters into their own hands. The book-loving moms then teamed up to create a much-needed national event and on January 27th, 2012 the first ever Multicultural Children's Book Day was celebrated.

Using the Multicultural Children's Book Day platform, the mission from Day One has been to not only raise awareness around kid's books that celebrate diversity, but to also get more of these types of books into classrooms and libraries.

"Kids need to 'see themselves' in the pages of the books they read," noted Budayr. "We are determined to not only shine the spotlight on all of the multicultural books available but also offer visibility for the amazing authors and publishers who create them."

The MCBBD online celebration attracts thousands of supporters, over 800 book reviewers and dozens of quality authors and publishers. The non-profit has also shifted from an "every January 27th" model to "the last Friday in January" to avoid conflicting with International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The upcoming MCBBD celebration will occur on and offline on January 29, 2021.

SUMMARY OF THE Annual Multicultural Children's Book Day EVENT (The last Friday in January of any year)

FIRST, *a giant blog tour* —

so that readers, parents, teachers, librarians, and caregivers can explore lots of books with diversity content via book reviews, book lists, and links.

SECOND, *a giant networking event* —

to connect organizers, sponsors, co-hosts, bloggers, and others interested in expanding awareness of, and promotion of multicultural children's books.

THIRD, *a virtual book drive* —

to place multicultural books in locations where they are needed.

Following the book review, you will find information and links for the generous SPONSORS, CO-HOSTS, and PARTNERS of the MCCBD global event. Have Questions? Email the MCBBD Project Manager at Becky (at) MulticulturalChildrensBookDay (dot)com.

Simple Ways You Can Get Involved in Multicultural Children's Book Day as a Teacher, Librarian, Caregiver, or Parent.

Throughout the months of November-January, leading up to the celebratory day (the last Friday of every January), educators, librarians, caregivers and parents can start planning and preparing with these FREE activities available today at www.multiculturalchildrensbookday.com

Connect with Multicultural Children's Book Day on social media: NOTE: Their official hashtag is **#ReadYourWorld**

- Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MulticulturalChildrensBookDay>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/MCChildsBookDay>
-

A Plethora of Yearly Classroom Kits

[FREE Classroom "Empathy" Kit:](#)

[FREE Poverty Doesn't Discriminate: Understanding Poverty in America Classroom Kit:](#)

[2019/2020 Physical and Developmental Challenges Classroom Kit \(Understand and Celebrate our Differences\)](#)

[Free Kindness Classroom Kit for Homeschoolers, Organizations, Librarians and Educators](#)

[Free Diversity Book Lists and Activities for Teachers and Parents:](#) Curated lists of books about diverse topics including: countries, religions, holidays, ethnicities, in addition to special needs and LGBTQ. Visit the MCBBD website and click the Reading Resources tab or go here:

Get a Free Book for your Classroom:

MCBD's main mission is to get brand new, multicultural books for kids and teens into classrooms and the hands of readers. Our Free Books for Classrooms initiative allows us to partner with authors and publishers to achieve that goal. Go [here](#) to get on the list!

Our Exclusive Facebook Group: If you haven't already done so, join our [MCBD private Facebook Group](#) and connect with other like-minded reviewers, educators, parents, readers, and authors.

****Don't forget to connect with Multicultural Children's Book Day on social media and be sure and look for/use their official hashtag #ReadYourWorld.**

More Great Activist and Activism Resources for Kids

[Raising Readers, Activists, and Leaders from Birth](#) online course for kids and parents

Sites to visit for more details and ideas:

- <https://youthactivismproject.org/>
- <https://youthmovenational.org/>
- <https://www.one.org/international/blog/inspiring-activist-hopes-2020/>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/28/world/youth-environment-activists-greta-thunberg-trnd/index.html>
- [Youth Environmental Activists article:](#)

[Girls Have Rights on Instagram](#): A youth-powered global non-profit providing education through diplomacy to eliminate barriers so girls have access to their basic human rights.

[The Student Period Movement on Instagram](#): Student-Led Movement dedicated to supporting menstrual equity and reforming early period education

JUSTICE FOR AHMAUD

[Readers to Eaters](#) - Food literacy from the ground up. *Good Reads & Good Eats. That's what we're about.* Whether publishing, organizing events, or bookselling — we promote conversations about growing, cooking and eating food. Dig in. Educating the next generation on food insecurities, food cultures, and helping children and families have a better understanding of what and how we eat.

[50 Environmental Activist Activities Kids can do at Home](#)

[How to Introduce Children to Activism](#) (Biracial Bookworms)

[Teaching Tolerance Art and Community Activism Online Activity](#): Talking about activism, activists and leaders, helps children understand how change can happen in a community. This lesson will give students a chance to think about what these concepts mean and to consider the relationship between community activism and the visual arts.

[Healthcare Activism](#): The Children's Defense Fund.

Thank you so much for your support!